

## **Forest Management Plan Criteria Practice/Activity Code (106) (No.)**

### **1. Definition**

A forest management plan is a site specific plan developed for a client, which addresses one or more resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities or practices will be planned and applied. These criteria were developed to implement Section 1240 (A) of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, which allows for the development of forest management plans as one of the purposes of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The forest management plan will:

- a) Meet Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) quality criteria for the identified resource concern(s).
- b) Comply with federal, state, tribal, and local laws, regulations, and permit requirements.
- c) Meet the client's objectives.

### **2. Forest Management Plan Criteria**

This section establishes the minimum criteria to be addressed in the development of Forest Management Plans.

#### **A. General Criteria**

1. An Environmental Evaluation (EE) (CPA 52) is to be prepared for all activity plans to demonstrate NRCS compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Environmental Justice, Air Quality, and other designated environmental concerns and environmental laws. The environmental effects from the activity plans on environmental resource concerns should be clearly documented on the EE (CPA-52 form). The following is abbreviated guidance for preparation of the EE:
  - a. Planners and TSPs should follow the EE guidance delineated in the National Environmental Compliance Handbook.
  - b. The EE describes the existing conditions for all applicable resource concerns.
  - c. The EE will assess the resources potentially impacted by the no action, proposed action and any reasonable alternatives.
  - d. Guide sheets will accompany the EE, as needed, to provide information on how to assess and deal with special environmental concerns.
  - e. The findings section of the EE is to identify whether NRCS has determined based on the analysis of the EE: (1) that a site specific environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS) should be prepared based on the significance of potential impacts, or (2) the EE can be tiered to a state, regional, or national programmatic EA or EIS because the proposed effects have been sufficiently analyzed in a State, regional, national programmatic EA or EIS.
  - f. TSP and planners are required to complete NRCS' Level I Environmental Compliance training prior to prepare any EE CPA 52.

2. A Forest Management Plan shall be developed by certified technical service providers. In accordance with Section 1240 (A), the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) program provides funding support through contracts with eligible producers to obtain services of certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) for development a Forest Management Plan (FMP). The specific criteria required for each type of certification for TSP is located on the TSP registry (TechReg) web site at: <http://techreg.usda.gov/>

**B. Background and Site Information**

1. Landowner information – name, address, operation, size
2. Location and plan map of parcel
3. Documentation of existing practices
4. Past harvest history
5. Identification of resource concerns

**C. Client Objectives, which may include these considerations and others**

1. Expected income
2. Forest stand improvement
3. Wildlife habitat/riparian areas
4. Recreation
5. Agroforestry
6. Pollinator Habitat and Protection

**D. Existing Conditions**

1. Identify resource concerns based on an inventory to assess these concerns and opportunity for treatment. The inventory will typically include forest management unit and stand boundaries, site index, basal area, species, size class, wood product potential, soil conditions, slopes, topography, aspect, natural and cultural features, roads, wildfire risk (surface and crown fires), risk of insect and disease infestation, fish and wildlife species and habitat elements, noxious and invasive species, water quality and other important features as applicable.

**E. Desired Future Conditions**

1. Goals such as stocking, basal area, species composition, wildlife, pollinator habitat and protection, recreation, etc. for stands where practices/activities are recommended to meet future goals.

**F. Forest Management Plan Documentation**

1. Forest management plan map – boundaries, fields, scale, north arrow, stand boundaries, appropriate map symbols

2. Soils map – legend, interpretations, suitability index for forest activities
3. A wetland delineation map and associated wetland compliance documentation (Food Security Act of 1985), if applicable.
4. Conservation plan (record of decisions) (*Utilizing Customer Service Toolkit – Plug-In or MsWord Document*) to include the planned practice(s), the amounts to be applied, the schedule for implementation, and the appropriate site specific specifications and/or job sheet for each practice. A Forest Management Plan may include, but is not limited to, the conservation practices listed below:
  - **Access Control** (472) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Forest Stand Improvement** (666) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment** (654) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Forest Trails and Landings** (655) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Forest Slash Treatment** (384) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Firebreak** (394) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Fuel Break** (383) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Multi-Story Cropping** (379) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Prescribed Burning** (338) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Riparian Forest Buffer** (391) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Silvopasture Establishment** (791) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Tree/Shrub Site Preparation** (490) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Tree/Shrub Establishment** (612) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Tree/Shrub Pruning** (660) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Alley Cropping** (311) plus site specific specifications or job sheet
  - **Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment** (380) plus site specific specifications or job sheet

- **Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation (650)** plus site specific specifications or job sheet

**3. Deliverables for the Client – a hardcopy of the plan that includes:**

- Cover page – name, address, phone of client and TSP; Total Acres of the Plan, signature blocks for the TSP, producer, and a signature block for the NRCS acceptance.
- Soils map and appropriate soil descriptions
- Resource assessment results (wind and water erosion, water availability, soil fertility, and others that may be needed)
- For management practices. The planned practices and the site specific specifications on how each practice will be applied; when the practice will be applied, and the extent (acres or number) that will be applied.
- For engineering/structural practices. The planned practice when it will be applied and extent, and located on the conservation plan map.

**4. Deliverables for NRCS Field Office:**

- Complete Hardcopy and Electronic copy of the client's plan (MsWord copy).
- Digital Conservation Plan Map with fields, features, and structural practices located.
- Digital Soils Map.
- Completed CPA 52 and appropriate worksheets.

**Coordination with State Forestry Agencies and U.S. Forest Service**

In accordance with Section 2506 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, NRCS will accept as a qualifying EQIP plan of operations:

- a) Forest Stewardship Plan, as described in Section 5 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, 16 U.S.C. 2103a; or
- b) Another practice plan approved by the State Forester; or
- c) Another plan determined appropriate by the Secretary.

**Forest Stewardship Plans**

Through the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program, State forestry agencies annually receive financial and technical assistance that allows them to help landowners develop Forest Stewardship Plans (FSP) for their nonindustrial private forest land. FSP are prepared by foresters employed by State forestry agencies or by private consulting foresters under the direction of those State agencies. FSP are developed for the landowner's entire forested ownership and/or any land that will be planted to forest vegetation.

Forest Stewardship Plans will continue to be developed for private landowners by State forestry agencies, with financial and technical assistance provided by the U.S. Forest Service through the Forest Stewardship Program. With the provisions in the new Farm Bill

there is an opportunity for NRCS to provide financial assistance through EQIP that increases the planning and application of forestry-related conservation practices. NRCS will coordinate and cooperate with State forestry agencies in the delivery of forestry assistance to private landowners.

### **Forest Management Plan**

To complement the planning assistance provided by State forestry agencies (i.e., Forest Stewardship Plans), NRCS is using a different term to describe the planning assistance that will be provided to clients through EQIP. NRCS will use the term “Forest Management Plan (FMP)”. The FMP criteria described above were developed in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service to insure alignment with the national standards for a Forest Stewardship Plan. A few criteria were added to ensure compliance with NRCS requirements (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act). These criteria replace the Prescribed Forestry – 409 National Practice Standard, which will be rescinded and removed from the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NPCH).